

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account Evaluation Criteria

The 2018-2022 Recreation and Conservation Plan and Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Unifying Strategy establishes priorities for funding outdoor recreation in Washington State. This evaluation instrument incorporates the plan's priorities identified specifically for the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) to address underserved populations and health improvements.

Below are the changes to the evaluation instrument to reflect the 2018-2022 Unifying Strategy. These changes are incorporated into the evaluation criteria starting in the 2018 grant round.

- Add a question to criteria #2 "Project Need" in the evaluation criteria for projects meeting the single purpose of public access.
 - This change identifies the types of underserved populations and health indicators where the project is located.
- Add a question to criteria #2 "Project Need" in the evaluation criteria for project meeting both program purposes: protection and enhancement AND public access.
 - This change identifies the types of underserved populations and health indicators where the project is located.

There are no changes to the evaluation criteria for projects meeting the single purpose of protection and enhancement.

ALEA Evaluation Criteria

Projects Meeting the Single Purpose of Public Access

Evaluation Question Summary

The ALEA program strives to fund projects focused on two main program purposes: improve or protect aquatic lands for public purposes (protection and enhancement), or provide and improve public access to aquatic lands¹.

The following evaluation questions contain elements that are specific to projects meeting the single program purpose of providing or improving public access to aquatic lands. Depending on project type (acquisition or development) applicants will answer either Question 4 (acquisition projects) or Question 5 (development projects). Projects combining acquisition and development will answer both Questions 4 and 5.

Scored By	#	Question		Evaluators Score	Maximum Points
Advisory Committee	1	Fit with ALEA Program Goals	All projects	0-5	15
Advisory Committee	2	Project Need	All projects	0-5	20
Advisory Committee	3	Site Suitability	All projects	0-5	10
Advisory Committee	4	Urgency and Viability	Acquisition	0-5	10
			Combination	0-5	5
Advisory Committee	5	Project Design and Viability	Development	0-5	10
			Combination	0-5	5
Advisory Committee	6	Community Involvement and Support	All projects	0-5	10
RCO Staff	7	Growth Management Act Preference	All projects	0	0
RCO Staff	8	Proximity to People	All projects	0-1	1
Total Possible Points					66

¹Revised Code of Washington 79.105.150(1)

Evaluation Questions

- 1. Fit with ALEA Program Goals.** How well does this project fit the ALEA program goals to enhance, improve, or protect aquatic lands and provide public access to aquatic lands?²

Additional guidance on ALEA program goals and objectives are in Section 1 of this manual.

- How will this project:
 - Provide new opportunities for people to get to the water and access aquatic resources for recreational and educational purposes?
 - Renovate or improve existing public access to aquatic lands for recreational and educational use?
 - Create non-motorized boating or small boat and pedestrian-oriented access to aquatic lands that is designed to protect the integrity of the environment?
 - Integrate public access in a way that is compatible with the physical features of the site?
 - Increase public awareness of aquatic lands as a finite natural resource with irreplaceable public heritage?
- What are the environmental benefits of the proposed project?³

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points that are multiplied later by 3.

- 2. Project Need.** What is the need for this project and how will this project address the priorities for underserved populations and health recommendations in the 2018-2022 Recreation and Conservation Plan?

- Does the project address the priorities contained in an approved public access recreational plan or other state or local plan? Is it mentioned specifically in the plan?
- How is the need for this project supported in studies, surveys, and other analysis?
- How does this project provide opportunities for unserved or underserved recreational need, especially for water dependent uses?

²Revised Code of Washington 79.105.150

³Revised Code of Washington 79.105.150(2)

- Does the project include interpretive or educational elements?
- For Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19, how is the project referenced in the *Action Agenda* developed by the Puget Sound Partnership? The *Action Agenda* can be found at www.psp.wa.gov. Evaluators should ignore this question for projects outside Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19.

To assist you in answering the questions about underserved populations and health recommendations, locate your project on the Grant Applicant Data Tool to determine whether your project is in a census tract in which one or more of the populations listed below are present. You also may provide more specific data about the demographics and health conditions of the population within the service area of the proposed project.

Demographic Measures for Underserved Populations

- The median household income level in the census tract where the project is located is below the median statewide household income level (\$62,108 as of 2015)
- Based on percentage, there are more people of color in the census tract where the project is located than the statewide percentage (30 percent as of 2015)
- Based on percentage, there are more people with a disability in the census tract where the project is located than the statewide percentage (13 percent as of 2015)

Opportunities for Health Improvements

- The body mass index for ages 16-19 in the census tract where the project is located is higher than the statewide body mass index (22.94 as of 2015)
- The mortality rate in the census tract where the project is located is higher than the statewide mortality rate (692 as of 2015)

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points that are multiplied later by 2.

Revised October 2017.

3. Site Suitability. Is the site well suited for the intended uses?

- Are the location and natural features of the site, for example the size, topography, soil conditions, and natural amenities, well suited for the intended uses?
- What are the historic and current human uses of the site?
- What are the historic and current ecological functions of the site?

- What steps will be taken to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts to the site once it has been acquired, or developed? Possible impacts to address could include flooding, extreme tides, storms, sources of contamination, and long-term impacts due to development and climate change.
- Are there similar sites available near the area that provide similar access opportunities or is this property a unique opportunity to address a specific access need?
- Can the site support facilities necessary for the intended type and quantity of use?
- Is the site of adequate size to accommodate the facilities proposed?

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points that are multiplied later by 2.

4. Urgency and Viability. Only acquisition or combination (acquisition and development) projects answer this question.

- Why purchase this particular property at this time? How viable are the anticipated future uses and benefits of the site?
- If ALEA funding is not made available, will high priority aquatic land habitat and/or public access be lost?
- What are the alternatives to acquiring the property?
- Is there an immediate threat or will the property be available for acquisition or enhancement at a later time?
- What is the likelihood that the property will be converted to a non-recreational use or that aquatic habitat resources will be impacted or lost if the property is not acquired now?
- Is there a threat to the public availability of the resources at the site?
- Will the site be available immediately for public use or will the site require some improvement to make it available for public use? If improvements are necessary, when will for the improvements be made?
- What is the nature and condition of existing surrounding land use as well as future factors such as shoreline designation, zoning, or comprehensive or project-specific planning that may impact the viability of the site?
- Describe land management practices in the area that may affect the viability of the site?

- Who will maintain the site and what resources are necessary and available for that maintenance?

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points. The points for acquisition projects are multiplied later by 2.

Revised February 2016.

5. Project Design and Viability. Only development or combination (acquisition and development) projects answer this question.

- How well does the project address the stated public access need? Is the project well designed? Will the project result in public access to aquatic lands that protect the integrity of the environment?

Some design elements that may be considered include accuracy of cost estimate, aesthetics, maintenance requirements, materials, phasing, risk management, recreational experience, spatial relationships, universal accessibility, and user friendly design.

- Does the project demonstrate good design criteria; does it make the best use of the site?
 - Does the design provide equal access for all people, including those with disabilities?
 - Does the proposed development protect the natural resources on site? For example, does the project include low impact development techniques, green infrastructure, or environmentally preferred building products?
 - Is the site design visually integrated into the landscape features?
 - How will the site be designed to handle projected use?
- What is the nature and condition of existing surrounding land use as well as future concerns such as shoreline designation, zoning, or comprehensive or project-specific planning?
- How likely are the proposed public use facilities given the required regulatory and proprietary approvals, funding, etc.?
- Who will maintain the site and what resources are necessary and available to do it?
- What outdoor environmental education elements are included in the project?

- o How much effort is dedicated to interpreting the value of the aquatic lands?
- o Are the themes or concepts appropriate to the specific site?
- o Does the content in the display match the intended audience?
- o Is the interpretive display accessible to wide variety of users?

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points. The points for development projects are multiplied later by 2.

Revised February 2016.

6. Community Involvement and Support.

- To what extent has the community been provided with an adequate opportunity to become informed about the project and provide input? What is the level of community support for the project?

Examples of community involvement may include public meetings, notices in local papers, newsletters, media coverage, and involvement in a local planning process that includes the specific project.

Examples of community support may include voter-approved initiatives, bond issues, or referenda; endorsements or other support from advisory boards and user or "friends" groups; letters; letters to the editor; or private contributions to the project.

▲ Evaluators score 0-5 points that are multiplied later by 2.

RCO Staff Scores

7. Growth Management Act Preference. Has the applicant⁴ made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act?⁵

State law requires that:

- A. Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040.

⁴Applicant in this question means counties, cities, and towns only. This segment of the question does not apply to state agencies, tribes, nonprofits, or lead entities.

⁵Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

- B. When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to applicants that have adopted the comprehensive plan and development regulations. An applicant is deemed to have satisfied the requirements for adopting a comprehensive plan and development regulations if it:
- Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law;
 - Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan; or
 - Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than 6 months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.
- C. A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference based on subsection (B) over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

Scores for this this question are based on information from the state Department of Commerce, Growth Management Division. If an agency's comprehensive plan, development regulations, or amendments have been appealed to a Growth Management Act Hearings Board, they cannot be penalized during the period of appeal. Scoring occurs after RCO's technical completion deadline.

▲ Staff scores 0 to -1 point. RCO staff subtracts a maximum of 1 point; there is no multiplier.

-1 point The applicant does not meet the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250).

0 points The applicant meets the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.

0 points The applicant is a state, tribal, or federal agency.

8. Proximity to People. RCO is required by law to give funding preference to projects in populated areas. Populated areas are defined as a town or city with a population of 5,000 or more, or a county with a population density of 250 or more people per square mile.⁶

- Is the project in an area meeting this definition?

▲ RCO staff scores 0-1 point. There is no multiplier.

⁶Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250

0 points	No
1 point	Yes

Projects Meeting Both Program Purposes: Protection and Enhancement AND Public Access Projects

Evaluation Question Summary

The ALEA program strives to fund projects focused on two main program purposes: improve or protect aquatic lands for public purposes (protection and enhancement), or provide and improve public access to aquatic lands.⁷

Projects that meet both purposes (protecting or enhancing aquatic lands and providing or improving public access) may receive up to five additional points by receiving a higher weighted score under Question 1. Applicants address all elements under all questions except for Questions 4 and 5. Applicants answer Question 4 for acquisition projects. Applicants answer Question 5 for development or restoration projects. Projects combining acquisition and development or restoration will address Question 4 and the appropriate elements in Question 5 based on which elements represent the majority in the total project cost.

Scored By	#	Question	Elements	Project Type	Score	Maximum Points	Total
Advisory Committee	1	Fit with ALEA Program Goals	Protection and Enhancement	All projects	0-5	10	20
			Public Access		0-5	10	
Advisory Committee	2	Project Need	Protection and Enhancement	All projects	0-5	10	20
			Public Access		0-5	10	
Advisory Committee	3	Site Suitability	Protection and Enhancement	All projects	0-5	5	10
			Public Access		0-5	5	
Advisory Committee	4	Urgency and Viability (acquisition projects only)	All Elements	Acquisition	0-5	10	10
				Combination	0-5	5	5
Advisory Committee	5	Project Design and Viability (restoration and development projects only)	Protection and Enhancement	Restoration	0-5	5	10
			Public Access	Development	0-5	5	
			Protection and Enhancement	Combination	0-5	2.5	5
			Public Access	Combination	0-5	2.5	

⁷Revised Code of Washington 79.105.150(1)

Scored By	#	Question	Elements	Project Type	Score	Maximum Points	Total
Advisory Committee	6	Community Involvement and Support	All Elements	All projects	0-5	10	10
RCO Staff	7	Growth Management Act Preference	All Elements	All projects	0	0	0
RCO Staff	8	Proximity to People	All Elements	All projects	0-1	1	1
Total Possible Points						71	71

Evaluation Questions

- 1. Fit with ALEA Program Goals.** How well does this project fit the ALEA program goals to enhance, improve, or protect aquatic lands and provide public access to aquatic lands?⁸

Additional guidance on ALEA program goals and objectives are in Section 1 of this manual.

Protection and Enhancement Projects

- How will this project:
 - Protect existing, high value aquatic land that will contribute to important ecological functions and processes?
 - Improve the ecological function of aquatic resources through the restoration and enhancement of critical marine, estuarine, and freshwater aquatic land?
 - Preserve or establish naturally, self-sustaining aquatic and riparian areas that are a high priority in the larger ecological landscape?
- What are the environmental benefits of the proposed project?⁹

⁸Revised Code of Washington 79.105.150

⁹Revised Code of Washington 79.105.150(2)

Public Access Projects

- How will this project:
 - Provide new opportunities for people to get to the water and access aquatic resources for recreational and educational purposes?
 - Renovate or improve existing public access to aquatic lands for recreational and educational use?
 - Create non-motorized boating or small boat and pedestrian-oriented access to aquatic lands that is designed to protect the integrity of the environment?
 - Integrate public access in a way that is compatible with the physical features of the site?
 - Increase public awareness of aquatic lands as a finite natural resource with irreplaceable public heritage?
- What are the environmental benefits of the proposed project?¹⁰

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points for protection and enhancement questions and a maximum of 5 points for public access questions. The total score is multiplied by 2.

2. **Project Need.** What is the need for this project and how will this project address the priorities for underserved populations and health recommendations in the 2018-2022 Recreation and Conservation Plan?

Protection and Enhancement Projects

- How does the project address priorities contained in an approved watershed plan, shoreline master plan, species recovery plan, or other state or local plan? Is the project mentioned specifically in the plan?
- How does the project enhance or complement other nearby protection and enhancement efforts in the watershed or on the shoreline?
- How is the need for this project supported in studies, surveys, and other analyses?
- Will the project benefit sensitive, threatened, or endangered species or critical plant and animal communities? If so, how?

¹⁰Revised Code of Washington 79.105.150(2)

- For Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19, how is the project referenced in the *Action Agenda* developed by the Puget Sound Partnership? The *Action Agenda* can be found at www.psp.wa.gov. Evaluators should ignore this question for projects outside Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19.

Public Access Projects

- Does the project address the priorities contained in an approved public access recreational plan or other state or local plan? Is it mentioned specifically in the plan?
- How is the need for this project supported in studies, surveys, and other analysis?
- How does this project provide opportunities for unserved or underserved recreational need, especially for water dependent uses?
- Does the project include interpretive or educational elements?
- For Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19, how is the project referenced in the *Action Agenda* developed by the Puget Sound Partnership? The *Action Agenda* can be found at www.psp.wa.gov. Evaluators should ignore this question for projects outside Water Resource Inventory Areas 1-19.

To assist you in answering the questions about underserved populations and health recommendations, locate your project on the Grant Applicant Data Tool to determine whether your project is in a census tract in which one or more of the populations listed below are present. You also may provide more specific data about the demographics and health conditions of the population within the service area of the proposed project.

Demographic Measures for Underserved Populations

- The median household income level in the census tract where the project is located is below the median statewide household income level (\$62,108 as of 2015)
- Based on percentage, there are more people of color in the census tract where the project is located than the statewide percentage (30 percent as of 2015)
- Based on percentage, there are more people with a disability in the census tract where the project is located than the statewide percentage (13 percent as of 2015)

Opportunities for Health Improvements

- The body mass index for ages 16-19 in the census tract where the project is located is higher than the statewide body mass index (22.94 as of 2015)
- The mortality rate in the census tract where the project is located is higher than the statewide mortality rate (692 as of 2015)

- ▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points for protection and enhancement questions and a maximum of 5 points for public access questions. The total score is multiplied by 2.

Revised October 2017.

3. Site Suitability. Is the site well suited for the intended uses?

Protection and Enhancement Projects

- Are the location and natural features of the site, for example the size, topography, soil conditions, and natural amenities, well suited for the intended uses?
- What are the historic and current human uses of the site?
- What are the historic and current ecological functions of the site?
- What steps will be taken to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts to the site once it has been acquired, restored, enhanced, or developed? Possible impacts to address could include flooding, extreme tides, storms, sources of contamination, and long-term impacts due to development and climate change.
- Are there similar sites available near the area that provide a similar opportunity or is this property a one-of-a-kind opportunity to address an ecological need?
- Is the site size and configuration sufficient to meet the specified ecological goals on its own? Possible things to address include water quantity and flow patterns at the site, patch size and shape, edge and interior habitat, and habitat corridors.
- Is the site contiguous with other conservation areas or actions that address similar ecological functions and processes?

Public Access Projects

- Are the location and natural features of the site, for example the size, topography, soil conditions, and natural amenities, well suited for the intended uses?
- What are the historic and current human uses of the site?
- What are the historic and current ecological functions of the site?
- What steps will be taken to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts to the site once it has been acquired, or developed? Possible impacts to address could include

flooding, extreme tides, storms, sources of contamination, and long-term impacts due to development and climate change.

- Are there similar sites available near the area that provide similar access opportunities or is this property a unique opportunity to address a specific access need?
- Can the site support facilities necessary for the intended type and quantity of use?
- Is the site of adequate size to accommodate the facilities proposed?

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points for protection and enhancement questions and a maximum of 5 points for public access questions. There is no multiplier.

4. Urgency and Viability. Only acquisition projects answer this question.

- Why purchase this particular property at this time? How viable are the anticipated future uses and benefits of the site?
- If ALEA funding is not made available, will high priority aquatic land habitat and/or public access be lost?
- What are the alternatives to acquiring the property?
- Is there an immediate threat or will the property be available for acquisition or enhancement at a later time?
- What is the likelihood that the property will be converted to a non-recreational use or that aquatic habitat resources will be impacted or lost if the property is not acquired now?
- Is there a threat to the public availability of the resources at the site?
- Will the site be available immediately for public use or will the site require some improvement to make it available for public use? If improvements are necessary, when will the improvements be made?
- What is the nature and condition of existing surrounding land use as well as future factors such as shoreline designation, zoning, or comprehensive or project-specific planning that may impact the viability of the site?
- Describe land management practices in the area that may affect the viability of the site?

- Who will maintain the site and what resources are necessary and available for that maintenance?

▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points. The points for acquisition projects are multiplied later by 2.

Revised February 2016.

5. Project Design and Viability. Only restoration and enhancement projects, public access development projects, or combination (restoration and enhancement, and public access development) projects answer this question.

Restoration and Enhancement Projects

- How does the project address the stated restoration or enhancement need? Is the project well designed? Will the project lead to sustainable ecological functions and processes over time?
- How will the site be treated to re-establish the desired ecological processes and functions?
- What habitat functions will be enhanced or restored?
- How well does the proposed restoration or enhancement design or actions address desired long-term results?
- What is the certainty that the restoration or enhancement actions will be successful?
- Will the project require decreasing involvement over time?
- What is the habitat quality and land management practices in the area that may affect the viability of the site?
- What is the nature and condition of existing surrounding land use as well as future concerns such as shoreline designation, zoning, or comprehensive or project-specific planning?
- How will the site be managed over time to maintain the desired ecological processes and functions?
- Who will maintain the site and what resources are necessary and available to do it?

Public Access Projects

- How well does the project address the stated public access need? Is the project well designed? Will the project result in public access to aquatic lands that protect the integrity of the environment?

Some design elements that may be considered include accuracy of cost estimate, aesthetics, maintenance requirements, materials, phasing, risk management, recreational experience, spatial relationships, universal accessibility, and user friendly design.

- Does the project demonstrate good design criteria; does it make the best use of the site?
 - Does the design provide equal access for all people, including those with disabilities?
 - Does the proposed development protect the natural resources on site? For example, does the project include low impact development techniques, green infrastructure, or environmentally preferred building products?
 - Is the site design visually integrated into the landscape features?
 - How will the site be designed to handle projected use?
- What is the nature and condition of existing surrounding land use as well as future concerns such as shoreline designation, zoning, or comprehensive or project-specific planning?
- How likely are the proposed public use facilities given the required regulatory and proprietary approvals, funding, etc.?
- Who will maintain the site and what resources are necessary and available to do it?
- What outdoor environmental education elements are included in the project?
 - How much effort is dedicated to interpreting the value of the aquatic lands?
 - Are the themes or concepts appropriate to the specific site?
 - Does the content in the display match the intended audience?
 - Is the interpretive display accessible to wide variety of users?

- ▲ Evaluators award a maximum of 5 points for protection and enhancement questions and a maximum of 5 points for public access questions. The points for combination projects are multiplied later by 5.

Revised February 2016.

6. Community Involvement and Support.

- To what extent has the community been provided with an adequate opportunity to become informed about the project and provide input? What is the level of community support for the project?

Examples of community involvement may include public meetings, notices in local papers, newsletters, media coverage, and involvement in a local planning process that includes the specific project.

Examples of community support may include voter-approved initiatives, bond issues, or referenda; endorsements or other support from advisory boards and user or "friends" groups; letters; letters to the editor; or private contributions to the project.

- ▲ Evaluators score 0-5 points for all projects. The score is multiplied by 2.

RCO Staff Scores

7. Growth Management Act Preference. Has the applicant¹¹ made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act?¹²

State law requires that:

- A. Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040.
- B. When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to applicants that have adopted the comprehensive plan and development regulations. An applicant is deemed to have satisfied the requirements for adopting a comprehensive plan and development regulations if it:
 - Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law;

¹¹Applicant in this question means counties, cities, and towns only. This segment of the question does not apply to state agencies, tribes, nonprofits, or lead entities.

¹²Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

- Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan; or
- Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than 6 months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.

C. A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference based on subsection (B) over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

Scores for this question are based on information from the state Department of Commerce, Growth Management Division. If an agency's comprehensive plan, development regulations, or amendments have been appealed to a Growth Management Act Hearings Board, they cannot be penalized during the period of appeal. Scoring occurs after RCO's technical completion deadline.

▲ Staff scores 0 to -1 point. RCO staff subtracts a maximum of 1 point; there is no multiplier.

-1 point The applicant does not meet the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250).

0 points The applicant meets the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.

0 points The applicant is a state, tribal, or federal agency.

8. Proximity to People. RCO is required by law to give funding preference to projects in populated areas. Populated areas are defined as a town or city with a population of 5,000 or more, or a county with a population density of 250 or more people per square mile.¹³

- Is the project in an area meeting this definition?

▲ RCO staff scores 0-1 point. There is no multiplier.

0 points No

1 point Yes

¹³Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250.